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ABSTRACT

Outcomes of a pilot program designed to develop media education in Scottish primary and secondary schools are presented in this report. Methodology involved document analysis, classroom observation, postlesson interviews with teachers, and two sets of interviews with staff from four secondary and four primary schools--staff consisting specifically of one senior management representative, one teacher involved in both teaching and decision-making, and one teacher involved primarily in teaching from each school. Findings indicate that both secondary and primary schools recognized a large number of hurdles to be overcome, yet provided incentives for participating in media education. Despite a limited budget and a lack of sophisticated equipment and exemplary material, schools developed their own innovations. Collaboration among school management, interschool liaisons, and external consultancy are recommended for interdisciplinary development. (LMI)

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MEDIA EDUCATION: CURRICULUM, SCHOOL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

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The Research

Recent important advances in media education in Scottish schools include the publication (1988) of the **Media Education Curriculum Guidelines** (by the Scottish Film Council with the teachers' Association for Media Education in Scotland and the Scottish Curriculum Development Service) and a pilot scheme to explore the development of media education in primary and secondary schools. Our research set out to look at the policies which the pilot schools developed for media education: the **concepts** of media education adopted; the **curricular contexts** in which these were developed; the **course designs, content, objectives and patterns of unfolding** for the student; and the **management** of the innovation.*

Information was collected from the four secondary and four primary pilot schools using semi-structured interviews on two occasions. The interviews were carried out with a member of the schools' senior management active in the pilot, a teacher involved in both teaching and decision making/planning and a teacher whose main involvement was teaching. In addition, schools' documentation and accounts of their work at inter-school liaison meetings (every six weeks), classroom observation and immediate post-lesson teacher interviews, provided further data. The observations and analysis, in response to teachers' descriptions of their media education activities emerging from the interviews, were structured according to

- student analysis of media products
- student analysis of impact of the media
- student use of the technology necessary for media production
- student production of media output

*A fuller account of this can be found in **Hurdles and Incentives** by Sally Brown and Pamela Visocchi, Edinburgh: SCRE. 15 St John Street

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The activities were elaborated by reference to the key concepts of **construction, audience, narration, media institutions, economic organisation and representation of social groups and individuals** which had been identified in the **Guidelines**.

The **Guidelines** recommended that media education in secondary schools could **permeate** the curriculum or appear as **inserts or discrete courses**, and in the primary sector suggestions were made for **permeation, practical work and media projects**. The basic objective for media education would be:

To enable young people at school, home and in their environment to increase their understanding, critical appreciation and enjoyment of the mass media... An aim of media studies is to close the gap between analysis and practice, between criticism and doing. Only those who have engaged in practice are in the "correct" position to criticise; practice without critical awareness is blind, "common sensical" and sterile. Ideally, "doing" becomes in itself an aspect of critical awareness, the demonstration of an understanding of professional practices and critique of them. (pp.4-5).

In an earlier study of media education in 20 Scottish secondary schools, (Butts, 1986) identified two distinctive approaches. The **balanced** approach which followed advice that

students are encouraged to analyse real media artefacts and then involve themselves in a substantial amount of practical simulation. An understanding of the mass media is best achieved by a blend of analysis and practice; through the simulation and criticisms of professional practices and products. (p.7, **Teaching Media Studies**, 1983)

and the **practical/creative** primarily concerned with the 'educational value of production work as an end in itself, in the hope that there might be a critical/analytical spin-off'. (p.160)

These distinctions were used in our analysis.

Media Education in the Secondary Schools

In the secondary schools media education activity was concentrated in the later stages (age 16+) and focused on modules which form part of Scotland's National Certificate programme. In one school, however, the pattern was distinctive from the others; this school was committed to media education with younger groups (14 to 16) and to the use of **educational resources** with an emphasis on **production of media output**. Responsibility rested with teachers based in the Resources Unit and the approach conformed to the '**practical creative**'. In contrast, a second school focused on **analysis of media products** moving on to **media production** - a classic '**balanced**' approach. The other two both gave priority to **critical understanding of the media** and although their approaches might be described as '**balanced**' less importance was placed on simulated **production** activities.

The **Guidelines'** recommendations for **discrete courses** were evident and not unconnected with the national certification they brought with them. **Inserts** into other courses were rare and **permeation** through the high school curriculum was negligible despite schools' stated aspirations.

The second data collection showed even more emphasis on the paths which lead to the extrinsic rewards of national certification, but also an extension into a new government enterprise: the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative. This brought with it extra finance, but teachers involved had to compromise some of their '**ideal**' conceptualisations of media education.

There were some common trends in the development of school policies for media education. Senior management (Headteacher or Deputy) was usually actively involved, and unpromoted teachers (rather than Heads of Departments) often had a high profile. At least two of the schools encouraged inter-departmental teams, but their efforts to achieve permeation across the curriculum in the four schools were diverse and characterised by:

- assigning responsibility for media education to the school's **Resources Base** and using **policy-making groups** for the planning
- relying on **formal meetings** across the school's departments
- emphasising **co-operative teaching** by an **inter-departmental team**
- apportioning responsibility for permeation to a pair of **teachers experienced in media education**

The detail of the school's policies was encapsulated in three kinds of support: **resources**, **co-ordination** and **decision-making/accountability**. **Resources** included **time** (never enough), **staffing cover** (supported by education authorities while the number of schools was small), **in-service** (substantially by the Scottish Film Council), **funding** (a modest per capita allowance) and **equipment** (loans from the Scottish Film Council were important).

Co-ordination included maintaining contact with the education authorities and the Scottish Film Council, but most important was attendance at the liaison meetings with the other pilot schools. Only one school had a formal **co-ordinator**; she was unpromoted and the involvement of promoted staff from other departments led to some unsatisfactory features of her role. There is always a tension in multidisciplinary contexts in Scotland between the desire for a co-ordinator **with promotion** who can influence senior management and that for someone who is **involved in the developments** as an ordinary teacher.

Decision-making/accountability varied from the explicit policy planning groups of one school, through strong control by one Headteacher, to a devolved-to-departments model (uncomfortable for the co-ordinator) and finally responsibility resting on a pair of experienced but unpromoted teachers.

Media Education in the Primary Schools

The primary schools' aims were to raise teachers' and students' awareness of the importance of the media in their lives and of the nature of that influence. Three schools emphasised **permeation** from the outset and incorporated media education into the existing curriculum - particularly environmental studies, technology and language. They did this in different ways using **discrete production projects** (tape-slide, video or a newspaper) and **analysis of media products and their impact**. Two of these schools engaged **all the teachers and students** (including the infants class - 4 to 5 year olds). The fourth school had a **discrete project**: a radio station operated by the older students (11 to 12). For this school permeation was still an aspiration.

The primary schools contrasted with the secondaries by

- involving more of the school's teachers
- having more autonomy and being less influenced by **national certification** or initiatives
- being less experienced in media education
- achieving much higher levels of permeation in the curriculum
- making more effort to establish a progression of students' analysis and competences

- having less easy to categorise approaches (i.e. 'practical/creative' or 'balanced' seemed irrelevant).

The patterns of policy-making across schools were similar. All the **Headteachers** were involved in and committed to the scheme, each had one other teacher to make up the **media education team** and every school aspired to **involve the whole staff**. There were differences in management style from classical line management, with teachers accountable for including centrally determined objectives in their forward plans, to a shallow end 'learning by doing' approach initially involving a very few teachers.

As in the secondary sector, support from **resources**, **co-ordination** and **decision-making/accountability** was central to the school's policies. In particular, the need to pace the developments to ensure teachers developed a sense of **ownership and commitment** to media education was emphasised. Headteachers had to be **flexible** in providing class cover to encourage unusual activities introduced by the new developments. And considerable emphasis was put on **within-school** staff development which took advantage of some teachers' **outside-school** experiences of in-service. Again, the **inter-school meetings** were crucial. In decision making, the Headteacher was central; lines of accountability reflected this.

Overview

In implementing policies for media education, schools were conscious of **hurdles** to be overcome.

- the need for at least **minimum allocations of staff, time, in-service opportunities, funding and equipment**
- the **limited conceptual understanding** among teachers about the nature of media education
- the **lack of relevant skills** among teachers
- the problems of creating **flexible organisation** of staffing and timetabling
- the **scarcity of existing models** of good practice (particularly primary)
- the difficulties of persuading teachers to think of media education as an **integral part** of all aspects of the curriculum
- the **low awareness and unenthusiastic reactions** of some teachers to media education
- the **absence of promoted posts** in media education

There were, however, **rewards and incentives** to encourage teachers to build for the future:

- pupils were **enthusiastic and interested**
- teachers **enjoyed teaching** media education
- teachers were **motivated by their sense of ownership** of media education
- professional development of special expertise gave teachers **satisfaction**
- the new experience gained might be **valuable for promotion**
- some **unpromoted teachers experienced decision-making** normally restricted to the promoted
- school managements could use media education to **fulfil national requirements** for curriculum balance, whole school policies and enrichment.

and in the secondaries

- media education offered **opportunities for certification**
- media education provided a means of **taking advantage of extra resources** (eg TVEI)

and in the primaries

- working together had **positive effects on staff development** and was seen by Headteachers as a non-threatening way of providing support
- the exposure of both staff and pupils to the **work of other classes** was beneficial.

Schools' early concerns about the lack of exemplar material and sophisticated equipment later diminished. They came to value their **own** developments but still appreciated ideas from elsewhere). They also came to understand what can be achieved with only basic equipment and occasional loans and how to use more effectively their limited budgets. General recognition was apparent of the need to pay attention to **overcoming hurdles, maximising rewards, offering ownership and choice of approach** within an agreed framework of what counts as media education and being aware of the dangers of **idiosyncratic schemes**. Benevolent support from the school's management, inter-school liaison and external consultancy support are equally essential if an interdisciplinary development (never a favourite child of Scottish education) of this kind is to be effective on a wide scale.

Reference

Butts D (1986) Media Education in Scottish Secondary Schools
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